

AMWORLD Meeting in Baltimore, 9 February 1964

SUBJECT: Estimate of Operational Readiness Status

1. Based upon discussions with AMJAVA-4 on 9 February 1964, I estimate AMWORLD at approximately three months away from being ready to conduct operations against the target area. This estimate is based upon the description of the project by AMJAVA-4, including personnel assets, level of organization, state of training, condition and location of equipment, transportation, communications, logistics, construction of housing and training facilities, leadership and technical personnel available, and relations with host governments in Central America. My own experience in 1960 in establishing and managing similar personnel and physical facilities, for what was planned, initially at least, as a quite similar program in the same area, has also been considered in the above estimate. A brief discussion in each subject matter field follows.

a. Personnel assets. A cadre group is in Costa Rica and in Nicaragua at present. They appear to be sufficient to proceed with the development of facilities, but in Nicaragua at least, a period of construction and organization is necessary before more people should be recruited and shipped to the camps. A-4 feels the situation in Costa Rica is probably about the same.

b. Level of organization. The leadership and managerial assets now on board in the program are spread very thin. A time for testing and training, fitting people and organization together is required. A program such as this one cannot risk having the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time.

c. State of training. This varies from a few thoroughly trained, experienced, and capable men (to my personal knowledge) down through the degrees to completely inexperienced recruits. Various levels of training, from basic training, up to refresher training for experienced men must be accomplished before competent, functional teams and units are developed. After that point, more operational training for specific missions must be done before teams or units can be committed. I would strongly recommend that no operation be launched until the operational plan and all elements

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committed to the operation have been thoroughly and successfully tested by rehearsal exercises run under simulated, but as realistic as possible, conditions approximating those of the target area. A-4's description pointed up too many flaws in the program at this time, which could prove fatal to any operation attempted in the near future.

d. Equipment. Still in the process of being emplaced where needed, and procurement or training of personnel for operation and maintenance of equipment is still in progress. They are not yet able to handle breakdowns and mechanical failures without interruption of support to operations.

e. Transportation. The most glaring and fatal defect to both operations and support at the present time. Until the AKL and its crew are operating smoothly and efficiently under all conditions, the operation cannot be certain of proper support. All operations, plus logistics support, are dependent upon this ship. It is not yet operating at the minimum level of efficiency to support combat type operations.

There are three bases on the coast of Nicaragua, plus one on the coast of Costa Rica, and one in the interior. Of the four coastal bases, two cannot dock the AKL, including the ordnance reception and storage base in Costa Rica, and the operational Headquarters base at Monkey Point in Nicaragua. Of the five bases, only two can now be supported by the one transport aircraft (C-47) assigned to the program. Liaison and command travel by light aircraft will be increasingly necessary as the program expands and becomes more active. At present, the entire Nicaraguan portion is dependent upon the loan of a light aircraft from the host government. One Cessna-180 is in Costa Rica. With no highways and railroads connecting the scattered bases, airstrips and aircraft are going to be required to support and control the various phases of the program, particularly in times of foul weather and heavy seas.

f. Communications. A-4 describes communications as still being developed, both as to equipment, operators and maintenance. He is a thoroughly trained, tested and competent communicator himself, and I would tend to trust his judgment. He is not yet satisfied with his communications system.

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g. Logistics. Supplies are still being procured, received, stored, and processed. The system is still in the developmental stage, as to personnel and facilities.

h. Construction of housing and training facilities. Still in progress, limited to the extent indicated above by shortcomings in personnel, organization and other factors indicated in discussions of other related topics.

i. Leadership and technical personnel available. This is the heart of any program, but particularly a paramilitary operation. There is presently a shortage of both types. The prevailing philosophy within AMWORLD present leadership is to screen thoroughly the candidates, with selection based primarily upon personal commitment of the candidate on an individual basis to complete support of AMBIDDY-1 and his organization. This negates the possibility of going outside into the various pools of personnel and bidding for the services of already competent leaders and technicians. Leadership and organization must evolve and grow from within, and technicians must be trained within the organization which results. This takes time, and there will be many fumbles and falls as they learn to crawl, then toddle, then to walk, and finally to run. For what it's worth, I agree with them. This is on the basis of trying before to marry up basically discordant elements of Indonesians, Cubans, and Vietnamese into teams which theoretically contained the leadership and technical qualities required for good operations. We found, in too many cases, the personality clashes that resulted were so counter-productive as to make us wonder if we would have done better to stick to compatible groups of people and try to develop the required qualities from among them. I certainly believe it's worth a try, assuming we can afford the time and money required, and the patience, to give it a fair try.

j. Relations with host government. A-4 hinted at some of the problems, but I do not claim to be familiar enough with Central American politics to make a meaningful discussion. As I understand it, Costa Rica is a liberal oriented, democratic country, with limited internal security forces.

mainly on the strength of AMBIDDY-1's personal magnetism and selling job. However, unfavorable publicity would seriously threaten the survival in power of the present regime, which would have to react defensively by throwing

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them out. Just the opposite case exists next door in Nicaragua, which is more of a police state, and where the main danger seems to be that the Somozas might at any time support the program so vigorously that they end up by taking de facto control of it. In each case, AMWORLD must try to operate half a program in each country, not letting the other know the extent of his neighbors activity, and carefully balancing off one against the other so that each feels he is the favored suitor. This is a ticklish business, and the technique has not yet been perfected, apparently.

2. None of the above discussion should be taken as fault-finding or destructive criticism. In fact, I feel that, under the circumstances, they have done extremely well. I found no real surprises in any of the points we covered during the 9 Feb 64 meeting, and actually felt that the description given by A-4 put the program about where I would have expected it to be. They are fortunate to have A-4 and a few others who went through similar problems with me in 1960. Hopefully, they may have learned something from my mistakes.

3. To get back to the subject issue, as I see it, AMWORLD can do either of two things, but not both. They can continue with what appears to me to be a generally sound approach to developing the personnel and physical assets they will require for effective operations. I believe they can do this, and still divert the attention and effort necessary to prepare and mount out one or more small, simple, quick in and out operations such as low risk sabotage, abduction or assassination, release and exfiltration of prisoners, small raid, or other harassment measures, within a period of approximately three months.

4. On the other hand, the limited AMWORLD managerial capability and existing assets can be focused entirely upon mounting out an operation and this could be done in about one month. In my estimation, the other problem areas described above would likely be neglected during that period, with resulting detriment to orderly growth and development of the project. I believe that the chances for success under the first option above would be measureably greater, a solid foundation for the entire program could be laid down, and the payoff in the long run much more. However, it must be pointed out that AMWORLD will have to have successful operations before the people and support they will require are forthcoming in sufficient numbers to perform their ultimate mission. So we find ourselves caught somewhat in a vicious circle, bound round by a chain of circumstances and factors that are required for successful paramilitary operations. I would prefer to weld tightly

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together each of the links in the chain before committing it to do the job expected of it.

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File:  
Program